

Message Text

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IO-13 /103 W

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O R 201132Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8846
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY LISBON
USNMR SHAPE
USMISSION USNATO
USCINCEUR
DIA WASHDC
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
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USMISSION USBERLIN
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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 09460

MILITARY ADDRESSEES ALSO FOR POLADS

USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: ELECTIONS 1978: THE MAJORITY REMAINS THE
MAJORITY

SUMMARY. THE SECOND ROUND OF THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS PRODUCED A SOLID MAJORITY FOR THE CURRENT GOVERNING COALITION, WHICH WILL NOW CONTROL 291 OF THE 491 ASSEMBLY SEATS. THE RPR OF JACQUES CHIRAC REMAINS THE LARGEST SINGLE PARTY WITH 148 DEPUTIES, ALTHOUGH LOSING 36 SEATS AND NOW LESS PREDOMINANT WITHIN THE MAJORITY. SOCIALISTS (PS) GAINED 15 SEATS AND COMMUNISTS (PCF) 14, BUT THE PS WAS ONCE AGAIN SEVERELY DISAPPOINTED AS IT WON A TOTAL OF ONLY 103. THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE HAS BEEN CHANGED MORE THAN THE SEAT COUNT WOULD INDICATE: GISCARD'S HAND WITHIN THE MAJORITY HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED AND LEFT PARTIES, ESPECIALLY THE PS AND MRG, ARE BEGINNING TO RE-EVALUATE THEIR POLITICAL STRATEGIES. END SUMMARY.

1. A MAJORITY VICTORY: THE GOVERNING COALITION SCORED A STRIKING VICTORY MARCH 19 AS SECOND-ROUND CONTESTS PRODUCED A MAJORITY OF 291 SEATS IN THE 491-MEMBER NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. FINAL RESULTS WERE AS FOLLOWS (ALTHOUGH THERE WILL BE RECOUNTS IN SEVERAL CLOSE RACES):

MAJORITY		LEFT	
RPR	148	PS	103
PR	67	PCF	86

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CDS	40	MRG	10
RADICALS	8	OTHER	1
CNIP	8		
OTHER	20		
TOTAL	291	TOTAL	200

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR TABULATIONS DO NOT YET INCLUDE THE OFFICIAL RESULTS FOR THE INDIVIDUAL MAJORITY PARTIES LISTED ABOVE, BUT INSTEAD USE A SINGLE FIGURE OF 137 FOR THE UDF AND ITS "ASSOCIATES", A TOTAL WHICH WOULD SEEM TO INCLUDE THE PR, CDS, RADICALS, AND AT LEAST SOME PORTION OF THE CNIP AND/OR "OTHER" CATEGORIES. A BIT NEBULOUS IN TERMS OF SIZE AND COMPOSITION, THE UDF CERTAINLY INTENDS TO FORM THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP WHICH WILL SERVE AS THE DRIVING FORCE FOR GISCARD'S REFORM LEGISLATION. INTERESTINGLY, THE RPR HAS PUBLISHED ITS OWN CALCULATION OF UDF STRENGTH AS 115 DEPUTIES (BASED ONLY ON THE PR, CDS AND RADICALS) RATHER THAN 137.

2. THE POPULAR VOTE ON THE SECOND ROUND, SHOWING A TWO PERCENT GREATER TURNOUT THAN ON THE FIRST, TOTALLED 50.7 PERCENT FOR THE MAJORITY AND 49.3 PERCENT FOR THE LEFT, ALTHOUGH THE WINNER-TAKE-ALL SYSTEM OBVIOUSLY SKEWS THE

RELATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS (59 SEATS WERE WON BY LESS THAN ONE PERCENT, INCLUDING JEAN-JACQUES SERVAN-SCHREIBER WHOSE MARGIN WAS 22 VOTES). THERE IS, HOWEVER, LITTLE RATIONALE FOR ARGUING THAT POPULAR WILL HAS BEEN MISREPRESENTED BY THE ELECTOAL SYSTEM SINCE THE WINNING COALITION OBTAINED BOTH A MAJORITY IN VOTES AND SEATS (THE 68 RACES DECIDED ON MARCH 12 WOULD ADD ADDITIONAL WEIGHT TO THE MAJORITY TOTAL).

3. WINNERS AND LOSERS: THE IMMEDIATE POLITICAL RESULTS OF THE ELECTION ARE TWO-FOLD:

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8847
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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USNMR SHAPE
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-- THE CURRENT MAJORITY HAS BEEN REBALANCED WITH
THE UDF-ASSOCIATED FORCES ALMOST MATCHING
GAULLIST STRENGTH;
-- LEFT PARTIES HAVE BEEN SORELY DISAPPOINTED,
ESPECIALLY THE PS WHICH FELL FAR SHORT OF THE
EXPECTED 122-137 DEPUTIES (PARIS 9194).

ON THE MAJORITY SIDE, THE RPR NEARLY ATTAINED JACQUES
CHIRAC'S GOAL OF 150 DEPUTIES AND REMAINS THE LARGEST
AND MOST COHERENT POLITICAL GROUPING. UDF GAINS, HOWE-
VER, HAVE REDRESSED THE MAJORITY BALANCE, ALTHOUGH THE
PARLIAMENTARY FUTURE OF THE UDF IS STILL UNCERTAIN. THE
CDS OF JEAN LECANUET, FOR EXAMPLE, NOW HAS SUFFICIENT
DEPUTIES (40) TO FORM ITS OWN GROUP IN THE ASSEMBLY --
30 ARE NEEDED. REPUBLICAN PARTY (PR) LEADER SOISSON
HAS CALLED FOR A MEETING OF UDF LEADERS MARCH 20 TO DE-
TERMINE THE FORM WHICH THE HERETOFORE PURELY ELECTORAL
ORGANIZATION WILL TAKE IN PARLIAMENT. MAJORITY LOSERS
INCLUDED GISCARD'S CONFIDANT MICHEL PONIATOWSKI AND
CDS LEADER ANDRE DILIGENT.

4. MRG -- INTERNAL TENSION MOUNTS: ON THE LEFT, THE
BG LOSER, AS ON ROUND ONE, WAS ONCE AGAIN THE PS WHICH
CAPTURED ONLY 103 SEATS. THE COMMUNISTS GAINED SLIGHTLY
LESS THAN EXPECTED AND FARED POORLY IN PARIS WHERE FOUR
PCF DEPUTIES (INCLUDING DEFENSE EXPERT LOUIS BAILLOT)
WERE BEATEN, SOME IN DISTRICTS CONTROLLED FOR 50 YEARS.
THE MRG WON ONLY TEN SEATS AND IMMEDIATELY SHOWED SIGNS
OF INTERNAL TENSION AS PRESIDENT ROBERT FABRE SAID HE
NOW FELT RELIEVED OF HIS COMMITMENT TO THE COMMON PRO-
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GRAM, ONLY TO BE PUBLICLY CHALLENGED BY OTHER MRG LEA-
DERS SUCH AS MICHEL CREPEAU WHO CALLED FABRE'S REMARK

"PREMATURE".

5. SOCIALIST RATIONALIZATION: THE SOCIALISTS IN GENERAL AND PARTY LEADER FRANCOIS MITTERRAND IN PARTICULAR NOW PLACE THE BLAME FOR LEFT FAILURE SQUARELY ON THE COMMUNIST DOORSTEP. THE PS TRACES LEFT PROBLEMS TO THE SEPTEMBER 22 RUPTURE AND THE ENSUING PCF POLEMICAL CAMPAIGN WHICH DESTROYED THE SO-CALLED "LEFT DYNAMIC." THERE ARE ALREADY MANY IN THE PARTY WHO SEE A FUNDAMENTAL CONTRADICTION INHERENT IN THE UNION OF THE LEFT -- IT IS PREDICATED ON SOCIALIST PREDOMINANCE WHICH IS BY DEFINITION UNACCEPTABLE TO THE PCF. SHIFTING THE BLAME TO THE COMMUNISTS IS ONLY A PRELIMINARY MANEUVER WHICH IS SURE TO BE FOLLOWED BY SERIOUS RE-EXAMINATION OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT AND COMMON PROGRAM STRATEGIES. FS LOSERS INCLUDED NATIONAL SECRETARIES CLAUDE ESTIER, LIONEL JOSPIN AND CHARLES-EMILE LOO; WINNERS INCLUDED MICHEL ROCARD AND CHARLES HERNU.

6. A SATISFIED PCF: AS ON THE FIRST ROUND, THE PCF DID NOT ACHIEVE THE EXPECTED RESULTS BUT NONETHELESS SEEMS REASONABLY SATISFIED, HAVING ACHIEVED ITS GREATEST PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION UNDER THE FIFTH REPUBLIC (SINCE 1958). THE PARLIAMENTARY MARGIN BETWEEN COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS/MRG HAS BEEN SLIGHTLY NARROWED FROM 103-74 TO 113-86 (PROVIDING THE MRG REMAINS WITH THE PS); THE PCF SUCCESSFULLY INSERTED A NUMBER OF YOUNG PERSONALITIES INTO THE POLITICAL ARENA AND ELECTED 11 WOMEN DEPUTIES (OUT OF 17 IN THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY). GEORGES MARCHAIS CONTINUES TO TALK OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT AS THE PCF STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE, EVEN WHILE HIS SOCIALIST PARTNERS OPENLY CRITICIZE THE COMMUNISTS FOR SABOTAGING THE COMMON PROGRAM.

7. WHAT HAPPENED MARCH 19: THE MAJORITY VICTORY CAN
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BE ATTRIBUTED TO SEVERAL FACTORS:

- THE ELECTORATE WAS MOBILIZED AS NEVER BEFORE, WITH AN 85 PERCENT TURNOUT (OPPOSED TO 83 PERCENT MARCH 12). THIS EXTRA TWO PERCENT, THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO PARTICIPATE ONLY ON THE DECISIVE SECOND ROUND, WENT HEAVILY TO THE MAJORITY (AS IS NORMALLY THE CASE);
- PARTICIPATION BY THE ELDERLY WAS MUCH HIGHER THAN EXPECTED; THE YOUTH VOTE DID NOT GO OVERWHELMINGLY TO THE LEFT, BUT STAYED CLOSE TO OVERALL NATIONAL TRENDS;
- LEFT VOTERS, ESPECIALLY SOCIALIST SUPPORTERS, FREQUENTLY FAILED TO SUPPORT A LEFT CANDIDATE NOT OF THEIR OWN PARTY PREFERENCE. STILL, PS

VOTERS (ACCORDING TO PRELIMINARY AND STILL
UNRELIABLE FIGURES) TRANSFERRED ABOUT 71 PER-
CENT OF THEIR SUPPORT TO A COMMUNIST RUNNING
AGAINST THE RPR, BUT ONLY 62 PERCENT TO THE PCF
WHEN RUNNING AGAINST THE UDF (21 PERCENT IN

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8848
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
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FACT OPTING TO VOTE UDF RATHER THAN TO ABS-
TAIN);

- EVEN PCF TRANSFER TO PS CANDIDATES WAS SOME-
TIMES NOT GOOD, RESULTING IN LOST DISTRICTS,
ALTHOUGH IN GENERAL ABOUT 85-87 PERCENT OF
FIRST-ROUND COMMUNIST SUPPORTERS VOTED PS
WHEN NECESSARY. THE SOCIALISTS WILL EXAMINE
THESE LOSSES CAREFULLY TO SEE IF THERE WAS
DELIBERATE SABOTAGE;
- LEFT DISCIPLINE WORKED BEST IN TRADITIONAL
AREAS OF LEFT STRENGTH (SUCH AS NORD-PAS-DE-
CALAIS AND THE MIDI) AND LESS WELL IN
REGIONS OF NEWLY-FOUND INFLUENCE WHERE MORE
GAINS WERE EXPECTED. IN THE MARNE, FOR
EXAMPLE, THE LEFT WON ALL THREE MAJOR CITIES
IN MARCH 1977, BUT LOST ALL FOUR LEGISLATIVE
RACES, THANKS TO POOR DISCIPLINE;
- THE PS DID NOT PROFIT FROM SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT
FROM CENTRIST-ORIENTED VOTERS, CONFIRMING
THE TREND OF THE FIRST ROUND.

8. LACK OF DISCIPLINE AMONG LEFT VOTERS IS CLEARLY RE-
FLECTED IN THE RESULTS OF THE CRITICAL RACES DESCRIBED
IN PARIS 9194. OF THE 58 MAJORITY-HELD DISTRICTS WHERE
THE LEFT WON OVER 50 PERCENT ON THE FIRST ROUND, ONLY
33 FINALLY WERE WON.

- THE PCF ALONE WAS SUCCESSFUL IN ONLY 14 OF 30
SUCH DISTRICTS, INCLUDING SOME REMARKABLE LOS-
SES SUCH AS IN THE ESSONNE WHERE A 6,000 VOTE

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LEFT LEAD FOR POLITBURO MEMBER MIREILLE BERTRAND
ON THE FIRST ROUND BECAME A 5,000 VOTE DEFEAT
ON THE SECOND ROUND;

- PCF CANDIDATES IN 1973 WERE ALWAYS ELECTED ONCE
THE LEFT TOTALLED AT LEAST 55 PERCENT ON THE
FIRST ROUND. IN 1978, PCF VICTORY WAS NOT
GUARANTEED UNTIL THE 60 PERCENT LEVEL WAS

ACHIEVED.

-- AT THE SAME TIME, PS CANDIDATES IN 1973 WERE ALWAYS DEFEATED UNTIL THEY GOT 44-45 PERCENT OF THE FIRST ROUND VOTE. THIS YEAR, PS CANDIDATES WERE ABLE TO WIN WITH ONLY 42 PERCENT ON MARCH 12.

IN THE 45 DISTRICTS WHERE MARGINAL VOTES HELD THE KEY (ALWAYS IN CONJUNCTION WITH NEW VOTERS ON THE SECOND ROUND), THE LEFT WAS DESTROYED, WINNING ONLY 7. THESE AND OTHER FACTORS WILL BE EXAMINED IN MORE DETAIL IN SUBSEQUENT TELEGRAMS.

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